

EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT
ROUTING SLIP

TO:

		ACTION	INFO	DATE	INITIAL
1	DCI		5 X		
2	DDCI		6 X		
3	EXDIR				
4	D/ICS				
5	DDI				
6	DDA				
7	DDO				
8	DDS&T				
9	Chm/NIC				
10	GC		X 3		
11	IG				
12	Compt				
13	D/OLL	X /			
14	D/PAO		X 4		
15	D/PERS				
16	VC/NIC				
17	ER		X 2		
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SUSPENSE

Remarks To 13: Please prepare a response for DCI signature (FYI: D/PAO has, working with GC, generated correspondence on Hersh's book which was sent to Random House, Hersh's publisher)

Executive Secretary

4 Sep 86

Date

3637 (10-81)

JESSE HELMS
NORTH CAROLINA

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 29, 1986

Executive Registry

86- 3868X

The Honorable William J. Casey
Director of Central Intelligence
Central Intelligence Agency
Washington, DC 20505

Dear Bill:

I enclose an outrageous August 28 editorial from the Greensboro paper which takes another cheap shot at the President.

Since I was aboard the other KAL plane that night, I have accumulated information which puts the kabosh on such "findings" as attributed to Mr. Hersch. Somebody ought to respond to this editorial, and I'm willing to do it--but I first must know what I can properly talk about that would not violate classified national security information. Could your people help me with this?

There are many remarkable assertions in the editorial but perhaps the most laughable is the last sentence in the next-to-last paragraph: "But there is a difference between an accidental shooting and a deliberate one."

The shooting down of KAL 007 was about as "accidental" as the media misrepresentations of Ronald Reagan, Jesse Helms and others on the media's hate list.

Kindest regards.

Sincerely,



JESSE HELMS:pn

DCI
EXEC
REG

L-231-15

Greensboro News & Record

Robert D. Benson, President and Publisher

Ben J. Bowers, Vice President and Executive Editor

John R. Alexander, Editorial Page Editor

Ned Cline, Managing Editor

Thursday, August 28, 1986

A14

Editorials

The KAL mystery

Four days after the Soviet Union shot down a civilian South Korean Air Lines plane in 1983, President Reagan said in an angry speech: "There is no way a pilot could mistake this for anything other than a civilian airliner." In the days that followed, the Kremlin's masters became the punching bag for international outrage. Reagan's dark depiction of an "evil empire" quickly assumed the shroud of truth. The Soviets, after all, had coldly murdered 269 innocent people without blinking an eye.

But now come findings that provoke second thoughts about Soviet motives. In a soon-to-be published book (excerpted in next month's Atlantic Monthly magazine), Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative writer Seymour Hersh makes a different case.

Hersh believes the Soviets, just as they originally claimed, thought they were shooting down a U.S. reconnaissance plane flying toward a sensitive military installation on Sakhalin Island in the Sea of Japan.

Hersh also asserts that the U.S. government learned through intelligence data (and within hours after the event) that the Russians had mistaken the KAL airliner for a U.S. spy plane they had been tracking in the region. The off-course airliner, in fact, was following a flight plan often used by U.S. espionage aircraft.

If Hersh's account proves true, the

aviation, said he could not say for sure what the Soviets thought they were intercepting on that September night. His uncertainty contrasts sharply with Washington's persistent accusations that the Soviet's knowingly shot down a civilian plane.

Hersh spent two years analyzing intelligence data and interviewing Soviet and American officials. Though other books about the KAL shooting have been published (including two that point to a U.S. spy mission), Hersh's book carries import because of his distinguished credentials. A former investigative reporter for The New York Times, Hersh is responsible for uncovering the My Lai massacre during the Vietnam War.

According to Hersh, the KAL airliner strayed some 350 miles into Russian airspace because of KAL's error in programming its flight plan. Nor was this the first navigational mishap on KAL's record. On three previous occasions, KAL flights had been misprogrammed — though with less disastrous results.

Although Hersh's theory has the tight fit of a well-worked jigsaw puzzle, there will always be troubling questions about the KAL downing. Some will say, accurately, that the Soviets should not escape culpability just because they thought they were shooting down a spy plane. At the least, the Soviet pilot should have checked out the plane more carefully before shooting. But there is a

comment on Hersh's findings, but one State Department official did make a

the air. It strayed so far off course and who the Soviets thought they were